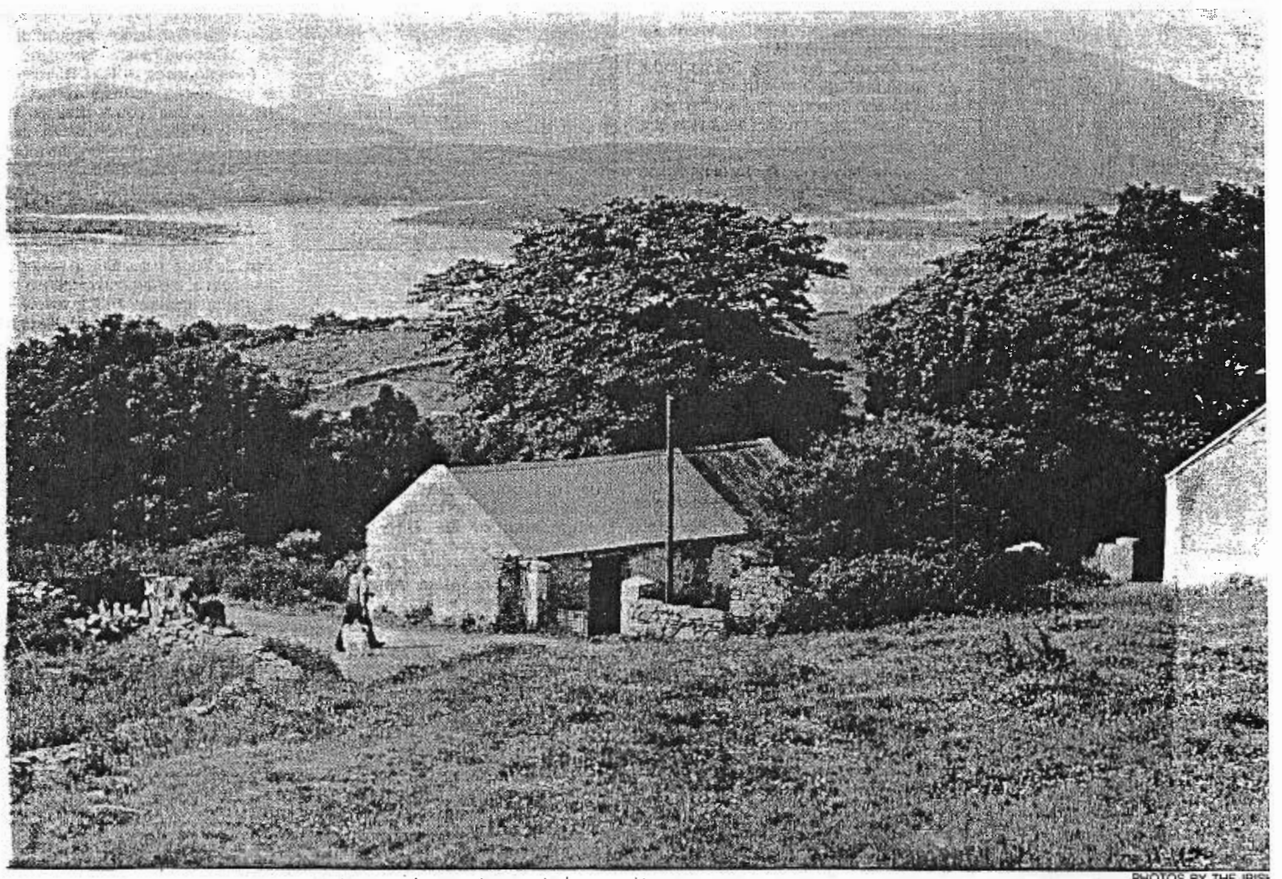
Pascagoula Public Library
Local History & Genealogical Dept.
McHugh Family



PHOTOS BY THE IRISH

Lough Conn or Lake Conn is the backdrop for a typical country day in County Mayo, Ireland, where Bob McHugh's ances

Bloodline calls Coastia

Journey to Ireland leads to County Mayo

By BOB MCHUGH
SPECIAL TO THE SUN HERALD

■ During the time of the Great Hunger in Ireland, Patrick McHugh and Mary Moran fled to America to escape a famine grave and to begin new lives far from family and friends. They were my great-grandparents, and I am indebted to them.

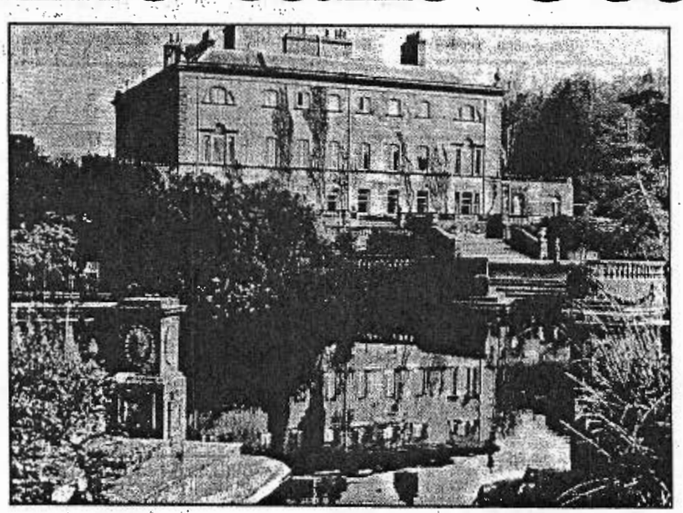
I owe my very existence, I suppose, to their courage in crossing that great ocean, joining hands in matrimony in Western Canada, then settling in Wisconsin to rear and educate nine children, my grandfather Peter Anthony among them.

I recently went to Ireland as a kind of obeisance to them, to walk where they once had walked and breathe the air they had breathed in response to that inexplicable call of the bloodline.

Since there are an estimated 40 million persons of Irish descent in this country, there may be some nearby who would like to go back to where they never came from to do the same. Accordingly, it might be useful if I offer a few details of my own venture into genealogy.

My quest for ancestral ghosts was uncommonly difficult because my father had died when I was an infant, and the McHugh grandparents lived in another state. I began the search by obtaining from the Wisconsin Board of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics the death certificate of my grandfather.

That document confirmed that his parents had been Patrick McHugh and Mary Moran and that both had been born in Ireland; nothing more. I then wrote to the Wisconsin Historical Society and was provided with records of the 1870 census which showed that Patrick and Mary had been farming in Osceola, Wis., at that time, and the children all had been



Westport House stands proudly in County Mayo, Ireland.

enrolled in school. I still didn't know where in Ireland my great-grandparents had come from.

I then obtained from the historical society the name of a registered genealogist. Her research led to what I had been looking for. She found that Patrick McHugh, at age 35, had enlisted in the 17th Regiment of the Wisconsin Infantry, Volunteers, and had been assigned to Company E. I have his measurements, the color of his hair and eyes and the fact that he had been wounded "by a musket ball passing through the centre of the palm of the left hand disabling the fingers of said hand while charging the works at Vicksburg."

About two years ago, I visited that Vicksburg battlefield to do a story for Southern Partisan magazine. At the time, I had no idea I was walking over terrain where Patrick had fought and bled. In another small-world surprise developed by the genealogist, I learned that my great-grandmother's sister Ellen Moran had been

nurse in New Orleans just 70 miles from where I live today. She died in Wisconsin at the age of 92.

But to get back to Patrick. It seemed obvious that a one-handed farmer would have had a difficult time making a living for himself and his family. Under the circumstances, the logical thing for him to have done was to apply to the government for a disability pension.

From the Civil War Museum in Madison, I obtained a General Services Administration form to request pension information. Patrick indeed had applied for a pension and was awarded $4 a month. When he died in 1875, Mary applied for a widow's pension and was awarded $12 a month for herself and three minor children. The form included information that she had been married as a young girl in her teens to one James Flannery in County Mayo, Ireland. He died shortly after they had left Ireland for America. Still, I had no exact village or

rocky country.

I then employed the I
search Co. of Dublin.
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of Mary and her first hu
Flannery, through docu
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Mayo.

The Hibernia also p
from and 1856 survey
that Mary Moran's wid
had lived in Islandeady
house with a valuation o
Patrick McHugh, in a vill
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fectly, so it is inconclu
this is the same Patrick
of the objects of my se

On a rainy afternoon,
her husband and I drove
try road along the shore
tra. We talked to a M
whose husband might
descendant of Mary's f
but we could find no livi
McHughs.

Time has apparently
change that part of May
easily imagine a Patrick
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building stone fences th
and working into the ni
the land productive.

There are McHughs
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year-old cemeteries app
sunken with their guests
green and rock-laced s
land.

Wherever they slee
earth rest softly upon t

■ McHugh is the former ex
and editorial director of The
1980 McHugh was grand r
St. Patrick's Day Parade,
the Gulf Coast Hibernia Mar
His daughter was colleen